

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

CHRISTOPHER J. VAZQUEZ,

Plaintiff,

v.

1:22-cv-00317
(GTS/TWD)

ST. MARY'S HEALTHCARE,

Defendant.

APPEARANCES:

CHRISTOPHER J. VAZQUEZ

Plaintiff, *pro se*

45 Arnold Ave.

Apt 2

Amsterdam, NY 12010

THERÈSE WILEY DANCKS, United States Magistrate Judge

ORDER AND REPORT-RECOMMENDATION

Christopher J. Vazquez ("Plaintiff"), proceeding *pro se*, commenced this action against St. Mary's Healthcare ("Defendant") on April 4, 2022, and, in lieu of paying the Northern District of New York's filing fee, seeks leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* ("IFP"). (Dkt. Nos. 1, 3.¹)

¹ This action was administratively closed on April 4, 2022, due to Plaintiff's failure to comply with the filing fee requirements, and Plaintiff was directed to respond within thirty (30) days if he wished to pursue this action. (Dkt. No. 2.) On May 2, 2022, Glenn T. Suddaby, Chief United States District Court Judge, ordered Plaintiff to show cause why he should not be enjoined from filing any future pleadings or documents of any kind (including motions) in the Northern District of New York *pro se* without prior permission of the Chief Judge or his or her designee (except pleadings or documents in an action that is open at the time of the issuance of the Court's anti-filing injunction or "Pre-Filing Order," until that action is closed). *In Re: Christopher J. Vazquez, Respondent*, 1:22-PF-0002-GTS (N.D.N.Y.) (filed 05/02/22). Although this matter was administratively closed at the time Chief Judge Suddaby issued the Order to Show Cause,

I. IFP APPLICATION

Plaintiff declares that he is unable to pay the filing fee for this action. (*See* Dkt. No. 3.) The undersigned has reviewed Plaintiff's IFP application and determines that he financially qualifies to proceed IFP. Therefore, Plaintiff's IFP application is granted.²

II. SCREENING OF THE COMPLAINT

A. Legal Standard

Under Section 1915(e), the Court must dismiss a complaint filed IFP if it determines that the action "(i) is frivolous or malicious; (ii) fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted; or (iii) seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief." 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B); *see Livingston v. Adirondack Beverage Co.*, 141 F.3d 434, 437 (2d Cir. 1998). The Court must also dismiss a complaint, or portion thereof, when the Court lacks subject-matter jurisdiction. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3). While the law mandates dismissal on any of these grounds, the Court is obliged to construe *pro se* pleadings liberally, *Harris v. Mills*, 572 F.3d 66, 72 (2d Cir. 2009), and interpret them to raise the "strongest [claims] that they suggest," *Triestman v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 470 F.3d 471, 474-75 (2d Cir. 2006) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted, emphasis in original).

A claim is frivolous when it "lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact." *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989), *abrogated on other grounds by Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007); *see also Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 33 (1992) (holding that "a

because Plaintiff timely filed an application to proceed IFP (*see* Dkt. Nos. 2, 3), this action was reopened and restored to the Court's active docket. (Dkt. No. 4.) Thereafter, Plaintiff failed to timely respond to the Court's Order to Show Cause. (*See generally* 1:22-PF-0002-GTS, Docket Activity.) On May 23, 2022, Chief Judge Suddaby issued a Pre-Filing Injunction. *Id.*, Dkt. No. 2.

² Plaintiff is advised that he will still be required to pay any costs and fees that he may incur in this matter, including, but not limited to, any copying fees or witness fees.

finding of factual frivolousness is appropriate when the facts alleged rise to the level of the irrational or the wholly incredible”); *Livingston*, 141 F.3d at 437 (“[A]n action is ‘frivolous’ when either: (1) the factual contentions are clearly baseless . . . or (2) the claim is based on an indisputably meritless legal theory.”) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted).

Pleading guidelines are set forth in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Specifically, Rule 8 provides that a pleading which sets forth a claim for relief shall contain, among other things, “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). The purpose of this Rule “is to give fair notice of the claim being asserted so as to permit the adverse party the opportunity to file a responsive answer [and] prepare an adequate defense.” *Hudson v. Artuz*, 95 CIV 4768, 1998 WL 832708, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. Nov. 30, 1998) (citations omitted). The statement should be “short and plain” because “[u]nnecessary prolixity in a pleading places an unjustified burden on the court and the party who must respond to it because they are forced to select the relevant material from a mass of verbiage.” *Salahuddin v. Cuomo*, 861 F.2d 40, 41-42 (2d Cir. 1998) (quoting 5 C. Wright & A. Miller, *Federal Practice and Procedure* § 1281, at 365 (1969)). Rule 10 provides, in part:

(b) Paragraphs; Separate Statements. A party must state its claims or defenses in numbered paragraphs, each limited as far as practicable to a single set of circumstances.

Fed. R. Civ. P. 10(b). This serves the purpose of “provid[ing] an easy mode of identification for referring to a particular paragraph in a prior pleading[.]” *Flores v. Graphtex*, 189 F.R.D. 54, 55 (N.D.N.Y. 1999) (quotation marks and citations omitted).

A complaint that does not comply with these Rules “presents far too a heavy burden in terms of defendants’ duty to shape a comprehensive defense and provides no meaningful basis for the Court to assess the sufficiency of [the plaintiff’s] claims,” and may properly be dismissed

by the court. *Gonzales v. Wing*, 167 F.R.D. 352, 355 (N.D.N.Y. 1996). “Dismissal, however, is usually reserved for those cases in which the complaint is so confused, ambiguous, vague, or otherwise unintelligible that its true substance, if any, is well disguised.” *Artuz*, 1998 WL 832708, at *2 (internal quotation marks omitted).

B. Summary of Plaintiff’s Complaint

Plaintiff does not submit a formal complaint in this matter. (*See* Dkt. No. 1.) His submission consists of a one-page, handwritten letter that states, in full:

Christopher Javier Vazquez Carbuccia here. I am suing St. Mary’s Medical Institution for not prescribing me the medication that I have requested. I have already told them that the medication they have given me is of no use to me and does not feel well. I demand that I be given what I have requested. I have already been enrolled in their reference programs which I have communicated to them as well.

I need 60,000 USD for the disrespect and to be allowed back-to the premises, as I did nothing to be discharged. I need a primary care physician and this is the second one that discharges me due to their incompetent behavior.

Take Care.

Id. at 1³; *see also id.* at 2 (letter from St. Mary’s Healthcare Amsterdam dated March 30, 2022, discharging Plaintiff from the practice.⁴)

³ Page references to documents identified by docket number are to the page numbers assigned by the CM/ECF docketing system maintained by the Clerk’s Office. Unless noted, excerpts from the record are reproduced exactly as they appear in the original and errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar have not been corrected.

⁴ *See Cortec Indus., Inc. v. Sum Holding L.P.*, 949 F.2d 42, 47 (2d Cir. 1991) (the complaint is deemed to include any written instrument attached to it as an exhibit or any statements or documents incorporated in it by reference).

On May 6, 2022, Plaintiff filed a letter demanding “25 million USD from St. Mary’s Institution Non-Negotiable.” (Dkt. No. 5.⁵) Plaintiff also filed a letter motion requesting to “take an Oath, to insure confidentiality for all courthouse matters.” (Dkt. No. 6.⁶) He also seeks “Diplomatic Immunity”. *Id.*

C. The Court’s Analysis

Initially, Plaintiff’s complaint and submissions fails to meet the pleading standards of Rules 8 and 10 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Plaintiff provides almost no context to his allegations. More importantly, Plaintiff fails to demonstrate this Court’s jurisdiction as he demonstrates neither federal question jurisdiction nor diversity jurisdiction. *See Smith ex. rel. Bey v. Kelly*, 12-CV-2319, 2012 WL 1898944, at *2 (E.D.N.Y. May 24, 2012) (court is obligated to analyze whether subject matter jurisdiction exists as a part of § 1915(e) initial review and to dismiss the complaint when subject matter jurisdiction is found lacking); *see, e.g., Vazquez v. Times Union Newspaper*, 1:21-cv-1359-DNH-CHH (N.D.N.Y.) (filed 12/20/21; dismissed 03/21/22 on initial review for lack of subject matter jurisdiction).

To properly allege diversity jurisdiction, Plaintiff must allege (1) diversity of citizenship between the parties, and (2) an amount in controversy that exceeds \$75,000. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a). Here, Plaintiff cannot establish diversity jurisdiction because Plaintiff and Defendant are all citizens of the same state, New York. Plaintiff provides that he lives in Amsterdam, New York, and St. Mary’s Healthcare is located in Amsterdam, New York.

⁵ Plaintiff also filed this letter in *Vazquez v. Hometown Health Center*, 1:21-cv-001371-MAD-CFH (N.D.N.Y.) (Dkt. No. 7).

⁶ Plaintiff also filed this letter in *Vazquez v. Hometown Health Center*, 1:21-cv-001371-MAD-CFH (N.D.N.Y.) (Dkt. No. 7).

In addition, Plaintiff has also failed to establish federal question jurisdiction as he has not set forth a federal law claim. 28 U.S.C. § 1331 confers onto federal courts subject matter jurisdiction over all federal questions, or “all civil actions arising under the Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States.” Federal question jurisdiction exists where the complaint “establishes either that federal law creates the cause of action or that the plaintiff’s right to relief necessarily depends on a resolution of a substantial question of federal law.” *Franchise Tax Bd. v. Construction Laborers Vacation Trust*, 463 U.S. 1, 27-28 (1983). Even liberally construed, Plaintiff identifies no statute under which his complaint is brought and the Court can discern none.

Generally, in cases involving *pro se* plaintiffs, a court should not dismiss a complaint without granting leave to amend “at least once” “when a liberal reading of the complaint gives any indication that a valid claim might be stated.” *Branum v. Clark*, 927 F.2d 698, 704-05 (2d Cir. 1991). However, an opportunity to amend is not required where “the problem with [the plaintiff’s] causes of action is substantive” such that “better pleading will not cure it.” *Cuoco v. Moritsugu*, 222 F.3d 99, 112 (2d Cir. 2000); *see also Cortec Indus. Inc. v. Sum Holding L.P.*, 949 F.2d 42, 48 (2d Cir. 1991) (“Of course, where a plaintiff is unable to allege any fact sufficient to support its claim, a complaint should be dismissed with prejudice.”).

Here, the Court recommends the complaint be dismissed because it is not acceptable under Rules 8 and 10 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and this Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction. Because lack of subject matter jurisdiction is a substantive defect, *Deul v. Dalton*, 1:11-CV-0637 (GTS/RFT), 2012 WL 235523, at *8 n.19 (N.D.N.Y. Jan. 25, 2012), the Court recommends dismissal without prejudice. *Hollander v. Garrett*, 710 F. App’x 35, 36 (2d Cir. 2018) (“[D]ismissal for subject matter jurisdiction must be without prejudice.”).

Moreover, because Plaintiff has a history of filing multiple cases, often making frivolous allegations, that are dismissed at the screening stage for failure to state a claim, lack of subject-matter jurisdiction, and or/failure to comply with the filing-fee requirements, *see In Re: Christopher J. Vazquez, Respondent*, 1:22-PF-0002 (GTS) (N.D.N.Y.) (filed 05/02/22) (collecting cases), the Court recommends dismissal without leave to amend.⁷ *See, e.g., Johnson v. Progressive.com*, 19-cv-11202-CM, 2020 WL 589127, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. Feb. 5, 2020) (declining to grant *pro se* plaintiff leave to amend in light of the plaintiff's "abusive litigation history" and where amendment would be futile).

WHEREFORE, based on the findings above, it is hereby

ORDERED that Plaintiff's application to proceed IFP (Dkt. No. 3) is **GRANTED FOR PURPOSES OF FILING**; and it is further

RECOMMENDED that this action be **DISMISSED WITHOUT PREJUDICE AND WITHOUT LEAVE TO AMEND**; and it is further

ORDERED that the Clerk shall file a copy of this Order and Report-Recommendation on Plaintiff, along with copies of the unpublished decisions cited herein in accordance with *Lebron v. Sanders*, 557 F.3d 76 (2d Cir. 2009) (per curiam).

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1), the parties have fourteen days within which to file written objections to the foregoing report.⁸ Such objections shall be filed with the Clerk of the

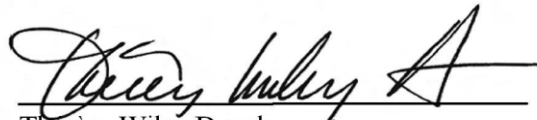
⁷ In light of the foregoing recommendation, Plaintiff is not prevented from filing his complaint in an appropriate state court, should he wish to do so. However, the undersigned makes no finding as to whether Plaintiff can successfully or properly bring the complaint in state court.

⁸ If you are proceeding *pro se* and are served with this Order and Report-Recommendation by mail, three additional days will be added to the fourteen-day period, meaning that you have seventeen days from the date the Order and Report-Recommendation was mailed to you to serve and file objections. Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(d). If the last day of that prescribed period falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, then the deadline is extended until the end of the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. Fed. R. Civ. 6(a)(1)(C).

Court. **FAILURE TO OBJECT TO THIS REPORT WITHIN FOURTEEN DAYS WILL PRECLUDE APPELLATE REVIEW.** *Roldan v. Racette*, 984 F.2d 85 (2d Cir. 1993) (citing *Small v. Sec’y of Health and Human Servs.*, 892 F.2d 15 (2d Cir. 1989)); 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1) (Supp. 2013); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72, 6(a).

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: May 25, 2022
Syracuse, New York



Therèse Wiley Dancks
United States Magistrate Judge

1998 WL 832708

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.
United States District Court, S.D. New York.

Theodore HUDSON, Plaintiff,
v.
Christopher ARTUZ, Warden Philip
Coombe, Commissioner Sergeant
Ambrosino Doctor Manion Defendants.

No. 95 CIV. 4768(JSR).

|
Nov. 30, 1998.

Attorneys and Law Firms

Mr. Theodore Hudson, Great Meadow Correctional Facility,
Comstock.

Alfred A. Delicata, Esq., Assistant Attorney General, New
York.

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

BUCHWALD, Magistrate J.

*1 Plaintiff Theodore Hudson filed this *pro se* action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 on April 26, 1995. Plaintiff's complaint alleges defendants violated his constitutional rights while he was an inmate at Green Haven Correctional Facility.¹ Plaintiff's complaint was dismissed *sua sponte* by Judge Thomas P. Griesa on June 26, 1995 pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(d). On September 26, 1995, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals vacated the judgment and remanded the case to the district court for further proceedings.

¹ Plaintiff is presently incarcerated at Sullivan Correctional Facility.

The case was reassigned to Judge Barbara S. Jones on January 31, 1996. Defendants moved to dismiss the complaint pursuant to Fed.R.Civ.P. 12(c) on November 25, 1996. Thereafter, the case was reassigned to Judge Jed S. Rakoff on February 26, 1997. On February 26, 1998, Judge Rakoff granted defendants' motion to dismiss, but vacated the judgment on April 10, 1998 in response to plaintiff's motion for reconsideration in which plaintiff claimed that he never received defendants' motion to dismiss.

By Judge Rakoff's Order dated April 14, 1998, this case was referred to me for general pretrial purposes and for a Report and Recommendation on any dispositive motion. Presently pending is defendants' renewed motion to dismiss. Plaintiff filed a reply on July 6, 1998. For the reasons discussed below, plaintiff's complaint is dismissed without prejudice, and plaintiff is granted leave to replead within thirty (30) days of the date of the entry of this order.

FACTS

Plaintiff alleges that he was assaulted by four inmates in the Green Haven Correctional Facility mess hall on March 14, 1995. (Complaint at 4.) He alleges that he was struck with a pipe and a fork while in the "pop room" between 6:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. (Complaint at 4-5.) Plaintiff contends that the attack left him with 11 stitches in his head, chronic headaches, nightmares, and pain in his arm, shoulder, and back. (*Id.*) Plaintiff also states that Sergeant Ambrosino "failed to secure [the] area and separate" him from his attackers. (Reply at 5.) Plaintiff's claim against Warden Artuz is that he "fail [sic] to qualify as warden." (Complaint at 4.) Plaintiff names Commissioner Coombes as a defendant, alleging Coombes "fail [sic] to appoint a qualified warden over security." (Amended Complaint at 5.) Plaintiff further alleges that Dr. Manion refused to give him pain medication. (Complaint at 5.) Plaintiff seeks to "prevent violent crimes" and demands \$6,000,000 in damages. (Amended Complaint at 5.)

Defendants moved to dismiss the complaint, arguing that: (1) the Eleventh Amendment bars suit against state defendants for money damages; (2) the plaintiff's allegations fail to state a claim for a constitutional violation; (3) the defendants are qualifiedly immune from damages; and (4) plaintiff must exhaust his administrative remedies before bringing this suit.

DISCUSSION

I find that plaintiff's complaint runs afoul of Rules 8 and 10 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and dismiss the complaint without prejudice and with leave to amend. Federal Rule 8 requires that a complaint contain "a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief." Fed.R.Civ.P. 8(a)(2). The purpose of this Rule "is to give fair notice of the claim being asserted so as to permit the

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adverse party the opportunity to file a responsive answer [and] prepare an adequate defense.” *Powell v. Marine Midland Bank*, 162 F.R.D. 15, 16 (N.D.N.Y.1995) (quoting *Brown v. Califano*, 75 F.R.D. 497, 498 (D.D.C.1977)); see *Salahuddin v. Cuomo*, 861 F.2d 40, 42 (2d Cir.1988) (stating that the “principal function of pleadings under the Federal Rules is to give the adverse party fair notice of the claim asserted so as to enable him to answer and prepare for trial”).

*2 Rule 10 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure requires, *inter alia*, that the allegations in a plaintiff's complaint be made in numbered paragraphs, each of which should recite, as far as practicable, only a single set of circumstances. *Moore's Federal Practice*, Vol. 2A, ¶ 10.03 (1996). Rule 10 also requires that each claim upon which plaintiff seeks relief be founded upon a separate transaction or occurrence. *Id.*² The purpose of Rule 10 is to “provide an easy mode of identification for referring to a particular paragraph in a prior pleading.” *Sandler v. Capanna*, 92 Civ. 4838, 1992 WL 392597, *3 (E.D.Pa. Dec.17, 1992) (citing 5 C. Wright & A. Miller, *Federal Practice and Procedure*, § 1323 at 735 (1990)).

2 Rule 10 states:

(b) Paragraphs; Separate Statements. All averments of claim or defense shall be made in numbered paragraphs, the contents of each of which shall be limited as far as practicable to a statement of a single set of circumstances; and a paragraph may be referred to by number in all succeeding pleadings. Each claim founded upon a separate transaction or occurrence and each defense other than denials shall be stated in a separate count or defense whenever a separation facilitates the clear presentation of the matters set forth.

A complaint that fails to comply with these pleading rules “presents far too heavy a burden in terms of defendants' duty to shape a comprehensive defense and provides no meaningful basis for the Court to assess the sufficiency of” a plaintiff's claims. *Gonzales v. Wing*, 167 F.R.D. 352, 355 (N.D.N.Y.1996). It may therefore be dismissed by the court. *Id.*; see also *Salahuddin v. Cuomo*, 861 F.2d at 42 (“When a complaint does not comply with the requirement that it be short and plain, the court has the power to, on its own initiative, ... dismiss the complaint”). Dismissal, however, is “usually reserved for those cases in which the complaint is so confused, ambiguous, vague, or otherwise unintelligible

that its true substance, if any, is well disguised.” *Id.* In those cases in which the court dismisses a *pro se* complaint for failure to comply with Rule 8, it should give the plaintiff leave to amend when the complaint states a claim that is on its face nonfrivolous. *Simmons v. Abruzzo*, 49 F.3d 83, 87 (2d Cir.1995).

In determining whether a nonfrivolous claim is stated, the complaint's allegations are taken as true, and the “complaint should not be dismissed for failure to state a claim unless it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of his claim which would entitle him to relief.” *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 45–46, 78 S.Ct. 99, 2 L.Ed.2d 80 (1957). The complaint of a *pro se* litigant is to be liberally construed in his favor when determining whether he has stated a meritorious claim. See *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520, 92 S.Ct. 594, 30 L.Ed.2d 652 (1972). Even if it is difficult to determine the actual substance of the plaintiff's complaint, outright dismissal without leave to amend the complaint is generally disfavored as an abuse of discretion. See *Salahuddin*, 861 F.2d at 42–42; see also *Doe v. City of New York*, No. 97 Civ. 420, 1997 WL 124214, at *2 (E.D.N.Y. Mar.12, 1997).

Here, plaintiff's *pro se* complaint fails to satisfy the requirements of Federal Rules 8 and 10. The complaint is often illegible and largely incomprehensible, scattering what appear to be allegations specific to plaintiff within a forest of headnotes copied from prior opinions. Defendants have answered with a boilerplate brief, which is perhaps all a defendant can do when faced with such a complaint. The Court is left with an insurmountable burden in attempting to make a reasoned ruling on such muddled pleadings.

*3 Although plaintiff's complaint is substantially incomprehensible, it appears to plead at least some claims that cannot be termed frivolous on their face. For example, plaintiff clearly alleges that inmates assaulted him and that Dr. Manion refused to provide him medical attention. He also appears to assert that Sergeant Ambrosino failed to protect him from the attack or take steps to prevent future attacks. (Plaintiff's Reply at 5). It is well established that an inmate's constitutional rights are violated when prison officials act with deliberate indifference to his safety or with intent to cause him harm. *Hendricks v. Coughlin*, 942 F.2d 109 (2d Cir.1991). It is similarly well established that an inmate's constitutional rights are violated when a prison doctor denies his request for medical care with deliberate indifference to the inmate's serious medical needs. *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429

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U.S. 97, 97 S.Ct. 285, 50 L.Ed.2d 251 (1976); *Hathaway v. Coughlin*, 37 F.3d 63 (2d Cir.1994), *cert. denied*, 513 U.S. 1154, 115 S.Ct. 1108, 130 L.Ed.2d 1074 (1995). Although plaintiff provides few facts to support his allegations, I disagree with defendants' assertion that outright dismissal is appropriate because it "appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of his claim which would entitle him to relief." Defendant's Memorandum at 5 (quoting *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 45–46, 78 S.Ct. 99, 2 L.Ed.2d 80 (1957)).

Because plaintiff's complaint does not comply with [Rules 8](#) and [10](#), it is hereby dismissed without prejudice, and plaintiff is granted leave to replead within thirty (30) days of the date of the entry of this Order. In drafting his second amended complaint, plaintiff is directed to number each paragraph and order the paragraphs chronologically, so that each incident in which he alleges a constitutional violation is described in the order that it occurred. Plaintiff is also directed to specifically describe the actions of each defendant that caused plaintiff

harm, and to do so in separate paragraphs for each defendant. Plaintiff's complaint shall contain the facts specific to the incidents plaintiff alleges occurred, and not any facts relating to any case that has been decided previously by a court of law. Plaintiff's complaint shall also contain a clear statement of the relief he seeks in addition to monetary damages.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, plaintiff's complaint is dismissed without prejudice, and plaintiff is granted leave to replead within thirty (30) days of the date of the entry of this Order.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

All Citations

Not Reported in F.Supp.2d, 1998 WL 832708

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2012 WL 1898944

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.
United States District Court,
E.D. New York.

Matthew R. SMITH, ex rel. Kasiin Ali BEY, Plaintiff,
v.
Chris Ann KELLY, Defendant.

No. 12–CV–2319 (JS)(AKT).

I
May 24, 2012.

Attorneys and Law Firms

Matthew R. Smith, Ex Rel., Kasiin Ali Bey, Central Islip, NY,
pro se.

No Appearance, for Defendant.

ORDER

SEYBERT, District Judge.

*1 Before the Court is the fee paid Complaint of *pro se* plaintiff Matthew R. Smith, ex rel. Kasiin Ali Bey (“Plaintiff”) filed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against the defendant, Hon. Chris Ann Kelley, Acting County Court Judge, Suffolk County District Court, 10th Judicial District (the “Defendant”).¹ Notwithstanding Plaintiff’s payment of the filing fee, for the reasons that follow, the Plaintiff’s Complaint is *sua sponte* DISMISSED pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(i)-(iii).

¹ The correct spelling of Judge Kelley’s last name includes the letter “e” before the “y”. Plaintiff is inconsistent in the spelling of this name, sometimes it is “Kelly” and elsewhere it is “Kelley.” To avoid any confusion, the Court corrects the spelling of Judge Kelley’s name in the caption and the Clerk of the Court is directed to so amend the caption.

BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, who is alleged to be of Moorish–American nationality, seeks to recover monetary damages allegedly incurred as a result of being ordered by Judge Kelley to submit

to a mental health examination on May 11, 2012. As the Court can best discern, Plaintiff is defending himself in an on-going criminal prosecution in the Suffolk County District Court. According to the Complaint, during an appearance before Judge Kelley on May 4, 2012, Plaintiff was ordered to undergo a mental evaluation. Plaintiff describes that, under the authority of the “Zodiac Constitution,” and in accordance with the “Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1836,” the state court lacks jurisdiction over him given that he is a Moorish–American.

According to the Complaint, Plaintiff requested that Judge Kelley provide Plaintiff with a “citation of authority to presume jurisdiction over a Moorish American and to state the court’s jurisdiction for the record.” Compl. at ¶ 5. Plaintiff alleges that Judge Kelley failed to do so and therefore now Plaintiff “demand[s] [that] all proceedings cease until CHRIS ANN KELLEY properly established jurisdiction for the record.” Compl. at ¶ 6. Plaintiff seeks to recover \$100,000.00 for “libel” as well as \$800 .00 for “filing, service and handling” and “daily interest for enduring encumbrance of the present libel” of \$1,000.00 per day.

DISCUSSION

I. Standard of Review

A district court is required to dismiss a complaint if the action is frivolous or malicious; fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted; or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) (i-iii); *Abbas v. Dixon*, 480 F.3d 636, 639 (2d Cir.2007). Regardless of whether a plaintiff has paid the filing fee, a district court should dismiss a complaint, *sua sponte*, if it determines that the action is frivolous. *Fitzgerald v. First East Seventh Street Tenants Corp.*, 221 F.3d 362, 363–64 (2d Cir.2000). The Court is required to dismiss the action as soon as it makes such a determination. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a).

An action is “frivolous” when either: (1) “ ‘the factual contentions are clearly baseless,’ such as when allegations are the product of delusion or fantasy,” or (2) “the claim is ‘based on an indisputably meritless legal theory.’ ” *Livingston v. Adirondack Beverage Co.*, 141 F.3d 434, 437 (2d Cir.1998) (internal citations omitted). It is axiomatic that *pro se* complaints are held to less stringent standards than pleadings drafted by attorneys and the Court is required to read the plaintiff’s *pro se* complaint liberally, *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94, 127 S.Ct. 2197, 167 L.Ed.2d 1081

(2007) (quoting *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106, 97 S.Ct. 285, 50 L.Ed.2d 251 (1976)); *Chavis v. Chappius*, 618 F.3d 162 (2d Cir.2010), and to construe them “ ‘to raise the strongest arguments that [they] suggest [].’ ” *Chavis*, 618 F.3d at 170 (quoting *Harris v. City of New York*, 607 F.3d 18, 24 (2d Cir.2010)). Moreover, at the pleadings stage of the proceeding, the Court must assume the truth of “all well-pleaded, nonconclusory factual allegations” in the complaint. *Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Petroleum Co.*, 621 F.3d 111, 124 (2d Cir.2010) (citing *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 129 S.Ct. 1937, 1949–50, 173 L.Ed.2d 868 (2009)); see, also *Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education*, 544 U.S. 167, 171, 125 S.Ct. 1497, 161 L.Ed.2d 361 (2005).

*2 Further, “subject matter jurisdiction, because it involves the court's power to hear a case, can never be forfeited or waived.” *United States v. Cotton*, 535 U.S. 625, 630, 122 S.Ct. 1781, 152 L.Ed.2d 860 (2002). The subject matter jurisdiction of the federal courts is limited. Federal jurisdiction exists only when a “federal question” is presented (28 U.S.C. § 1331), or where there is “diversity of citizenship” and the amount in controversy exceeds \$75,000.00 (28 U.S.C. § 1332). There is an independent obligation for a federal court to “determine whether subject matter jurisdiction exists, even in the absence of a challenge from any party.” *Arbaugh v. Y & H Corp.*, 546 U.S. 500, 514 (2006) (citation omitted). When a federal court concludes that it lacks subject matter jurisdiction, it must dismiss the complaint in its entirety. Fed.R.Civ.P. 12(h) (3).

II. Application

Having carefully reviewed Plaintiff's Complaint, the Court finds that it fails to state a plausible claim. As a threshold matter, Plaintiff has not properly invoked this Court's subject matter jurisdiction. Plaintiff has not alleged a federal question nor has he satisfied the diversity requirement because Plaintiff, an alleged New York resident, seeks to sue a New York Defendant, namely Judge Kelley, Acting County Court Judge, Suffolk County District Court, 10th Judicial District.

Even if the Court's subject matter jurisdiction were established, which it is not, the Complaint must be dismissed because it is frivolous. Liberally read, see *Hughes v. Rowe*, 449 U.S. 5, 9, 101 S.Ct. 173, 176, 66 L.Ed. 163 (1980), the gravamen of Plaintiff's Complaint is that he is not subject to the jurisdiction of the New York state court and therefore does not have to comply with the order entered by Judge Kelley. The law is clear that Moorish Americans, like all citizens of the United States, are subject to the laws of the

jurisdiction in which they reside. See, e.g., *Bey v. Jamaica Realty*, No. 12–CV–1241(ENV), 2012 WL 1634161, *1 n. 1 (E.D.N.Y. May 9, 2012) (citing *Bey v. Am. Tax Funding*, No. 11–CV–6458, 2012 WL 1495368, at *6 (W.D.N.Y. Apr. 27, 2012); *Gordon v. Deutsche Bank*, No. 11–CV–5090, 2011 WL 5325399, at *1 n. 1 (E.D.N.Y. Nov. 3, 2011); see, also *Bey v. City of Rochester*, 2012 WL 1565636, at *8 (W.D.N.Y. Apr. 30, 2012) (citing *El-Bey v. North Carolina*, No. 5:11–CV–0423FL, 2012 WL 368374, at *2 (E.D.N.C. Jan. 9, 2012) (unpublished) (“[A]ny claim based on the contention that Plaintiffs are not subject to the laws of North Carolina because of their alleged Moorish nationality and the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1787 is frivolous.”), recommendation adopted, 2012 WL 368369 (E.D.N.C. Feb. 3, 2012) (unpublished); *Bey v. American Tax Funding*, No. 11–CV–6458(CJS), 2012 WL 1498368, at *6 (W.D.N.Y. Apr. 27, 2012) (“[Plaintiffs'] purported status as a Moorish–American citizen does not enable him to violate state and federal laws without consequence.”); *Gordon v. Deutsche Bank Nat. Trust Co.*, No. 11–CV–5090 (WFK), 2011 WL 5325399, *1, n. 1 (E.D.N.Y. Nov. 3, 2011) (“Plaintiff's suggestion that as a member of the ‘Moorish–American’ nation he is immune from the laws of the United States is misguided”) (citing *Bey v. Bailey*, No. 09–CV–8416, 2010 WL 1531172, at *4 (S.D.N.Y. Apr. 15, 2010) (“petitioner's claim that he is entitled to ignore the laws of the State of New York by claiming membership in the ‘Moorish–American’ nation is without merit”) (add'l citation omitted).

*3 Because the Court is required to dismiss a civil action “at any time of the court determines that ... the action ... is frivolous,” Plaintiff's Complaint is dismissed. The instant Complaint is clearly frivolous given Plaintiff's claim that he is not subject to the jurisdiction of the New York state court because he is a Moorish American. *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325, 109 S.Ct. 1827, 104 L.Ed.2d 338 (1989) (a claim is “frivolous” if it lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact). Clearly, the allegations in the instant Complaint are based upon an indisputably meritless legal theory and are thus dismissed as frivolous pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) (i).

Even if the Plaintiff's claims were not frivolous, Plaintiff cannot recover damages from the Defendant, a sitting New York State Court Judge, Suffolk County District Court, since as a judge, she is entitled to absolute judicial immunity as well Eleventh Amendment Immunity. *Mahapatra v. Comstock*, 141 F.3d 1152 (2d Cir.1998) (“[T]he district court properly dismissed the claims for damages based on absolute

immunity [because] [j]udges are shielded from liability for civil damages for judicial acts performed in their judicial capacities.”) (citing *Mireles v. Waco*, 502 U.S. 9, 11–12, 112 S.Ct. 286, 116 L.Ed.2d 9 (1991)); *Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Florida*, 517 U.S. 44, 53–55, 116 S.Ct. 1114, 134 L.Ed.2d 252 (1996); *Pennhurst State School & Hosp. v. Halderman*, 465 U.S. 89, 100, 104 S.Ct. 900, 79 L.Ed.2d 67 (1984).

Given that the Complaint is based on an indisputably meritless legal theory, the Court declines to afford Plaintiff leave to amend his Complaint, as any amendment would be futile. *Cuoco v. Moritsugu*, 222 F.3d 99, 112 (2d Cir.2000). The Court certifies pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) that any appeal from this Order would not be taken in good faith and therefore in *forma pauperis* status is denied for the

purpose of any appeal. See *Coppedge v. United States*, 369 U.S. 438, 444–45, 82 S.Ct. 917, 8 L.Ed.2d 21 (1962).

CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, the Complaint is *sua sponte* dismissed with prejudice. The Clerk of the Court is directed to close this case.

SO ORDERED.

All Citations

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United States District Court,
N.D. New York.

Loriann DEUEL and Lorraine Deuel, Plaintiffs,
v.

Frank T. DALTON; State of New York; New York
State Unified Court System; Philip J. Danaher,
Esq., as the attorney appointed to act as Law
Guardian for BMD; Catherine Cholakis, as the
presiding justice of the Family Court assigned to
this proceeding; John & Jane Does 1–100, whose
identities may or may not be known but necessary
parties to these proceedings; ABC Corp's 1–100, those
entities whose identities are currently unknown, but
necessary parties to these proceedings, Defendants.

No. 1:11–CV–0637 (GTS/RFT).

I
Jan. 25, 2012.

Attorneys and Law Firms

Loriann and Lorraine Deuel, Unionville, TN, pro se.

DECISION and ORDER

Hon. GLENN T. SUDDABY, District Judge.

*1 Currently before the Court, in this *pro se* civil rights action filed by Loriann Deuel and Lorraine Deuel (“Plaintiffs”) against the above-captioned defendants (together “Defendants”), are (1) United States Magistrate Judge Randolph F. Treece’s Report–Recommendation recommending that Plaintiff’s Complaint be dismissed, and (2) Plaintiffs’ Objections to that Report–Recommendation. (Dkt.Nos.4, 5.) For the following reasons, the Report–Recommendation is accepted and adopted, and Plaintiffs’ Complaint is dismissed.

I. RELEVANT BACKGROUND

A. Plaintiffs’ Complaint

On June 8, 2011, Plaintiffs filed their Complaint in this action. (Dkt. No. 1.) Generally, in their Complaint, Plaintiffs allege that Defendants violated their constitutional right to

due process and equal protection under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 in connection with various custody proceedings involving Plaintiff Loriann’s minor child, BMD. (Dkt. No. 1 at 4.)

More specifically, construed with the utmost of special liberality, Plaintiffs’ Complaint asserts the following six claims against Defendants: (1) Defendants New York State Unified Court System and Cholakis violated, and/or conspired to violate, Plaintiffs’ due process rights under the Fourteenth Amendment by, *inter alia*, improperly (a) exercising jurisdiction over Plaintiffs during various custody proceedings from 2002 to 2004, where no such jurisdiction existed, (b) failing to notify her of various of those court proceedings, (c) holding various of those proceedings in her absence, and (d) awarding Defendant Dalton custody of BMD, even though Defendant Dalton had not established paternity; (2) Defendants New York State Unified Court System and Cholakis violated, and/or conspired to violate, Plaintiffs’ equal protection rights under the Fourteenth Amendment by denying Plaintiffs their parental and familial rights; (3) Defendants New York State Unified Court System, Cholakis and Danaher committed, and/or conspired to commit, fraud against Plaintiffs; (4) Defendants New York State Unified Court System, Cholakis and Danaher suborned, and/or conspired to suborn, perjury by Defendant Dalton; (5) Defendant Cholakis, New York State Family Court Judge committed judicial misconduct against Plaintiffs; and (6) Defendant Danaher committed professional misconduct against Plaintiffs. (Dkt. No. 1 at 30–34.)

For a more detailed recitation of Plaintiffs’ claims, and the factual allegations giving rise to those claims, reference is made to Plaintiffs’ Complaint and Magistrate Judge Treece’s Report–Recommendation in their entirety. (Dkt.Nos.1, 4.)

B. Magistrate Judge Treece’s Report–Recommendation

On July 19, 2011, Magistrate Judge Treece issued a Report–Recommendation recommending that Plaintiffs’ Complaint be dismissed for the following reasons: (1) the Court lacks subject-matter jurisdiction over domestic relations matters, including those related to child custody; (2) Plaintiffs’ claims are barred by the applicable statute of limitations; and (3) Plaintiff has failed to state a claim upon which relief can be granted pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2). (*See generally* Dkt. No. 4.)

C. Plaintiffs' Objections to the Report– Recommendation

*2 On August 1, 2011, Plaintiffs filed their Objections to the Report–Recommendation. (Dkt. No. 5.) Generally, liberally construed, Plaintiffs' Objections argue that Magistrate Judge Treece made the following errors: (1) the Court does have subject-matter jurisdiction in this case because the relief requested does not require the Court to “become enmeshed in factual disputes” (Dkt. No. 5 at 3); (2) Plaintiffs have stated a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 because they have adequately alleged Defendants Dalton and Danaher are state actors (Dkt. No. 5 at 4); and (3) the action is not barred by the applicable statute of limitations because the state court “matter has been ongoing for the past seven years.” (Dkt. No. 5 at 4.)

In addition, in their Objections, Plaintiffs seek leave to file an Amended Complaint, which Plaintiffs purport would do the following: (1) remove Defendant Cholakis from this action “pursuant to judicial immunity statutes”; (2) “remove the habeas corpus request”; and (3) include recent civil rights violations in an effort “to clear up misunderstandings regarding jurisdiction, timeliness, and the statement of claims.” (Dkt. No. 5 at 6.)

II. RELEVANT LEGAL STANDARDS

A. Standard of Review Governing a Report– Recommendation

When a specific objection is made to a portion of a magistrate judge's report-recommendation, the Court subjects that portion of the report-recommendation to a *de novo* review. Fed.R.Civ.P. 72(b)(2); 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C). To be “specific,” the objection must, with particularity, “identify [1] the portions of the proposed findings, recommendations, or report to which it has an objection and [2] the basis for the objection.” N.D.N.Y. L.R. 72.1(c).¹ When performing such a *de novo* review, the Court “may ... receive further evidence....” 28 U.S.C. § 636(b) (1). However, a district court will ordinarily refuse to consider evidentiary material that could have been, but was not, presented to the magistrate judge in the first instance.²

¹ See also *Mario v. P & C Food Markets, Inc.*, 313 F.3d 758, 766 (2d Cir.2002) (“Although Mario filed objections to the magistrate's report and recommendation, the statement with respect to his Title VII claim was not specific enough to preserve

this claim for review. The only reference made to the Title VII claim was one sentence on the last page of his objections, where he stated that it was error to deny his motion on the Title VII claim ‘[f]or the reasons set forth in Plaintiff's Memorandum of Law in Support of Motion for Partial Summary Judgment.’ This bare statement, devoid of any reference to specific findings or recommendations to which he objected and why, and unsupported by legal authority, was not sufficient to preserve the Title VII claim.”).

² See *Paddington Partners v. Bouchard*, 34 F.3d 1132, 1137–38 (2d Cir.1994) (“In objecting to a magistrate's report before the district court, a party has no right to present further testimony when it offers no justification for not offering the testimony at the hearing before the magistrate.”) [internal quotation marks and citations omitted]; *Pan Am. World Airways, Inc. v. Int'l Bhd. of Teamsters*, 894 F.2d 36, 40, n. 3 (2d Cir.1990) (district court did not abuse its discretion in denying plaintiff's request to present additional testimony where plaintiff “offered no justification for not offering the testimony at the hearing before the magistrate”); cf. *U.S. v. Raddatz*, 447 U.S. 667, 676, n. 3, 100 S.Ct. 2406, 65 L.Ed.2d 424 (1980) (“We conclude that to construe § 636(b)(1) to require the district court to conduct a second hearing whenever either party objected to the magistrate's credibility findings would largely frustrate the plain objective of Congress to alleviate the increasing congestion of litigation in the district courts.”); Fed.R.Civ.P. 72(b), Advisory Committee Notes: 1983 Addition (“The term ‘de novo’ does not indicate that a secondary evidentiary hearing is required.”).

When only a general objection is made to a portion of a magistrate judge's report-recommendation, the Court subjects that portion of the report-recommendation to only a clear error review. Fed.R.Civ.P. 72(b)(2) and (3); Fed.R.Civ.P. 72(b), Advisory Committee Notes: 1983 Addition.³ Similarly, when an objection merely reiterates the same arguments made by the objecting party in its original papers submitted to the magistrate judge, the Court subjects that portion of the report-recommendation to a clear error review.⁴ Finally, when a party makes no objection to a portion of a report-recommendation, the Court reviews that portion for clear

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error. Fed.R.Civ.P. 72(b), Advisory Committee Notes: 1983 Addition.⁵

³ See also *Brown v. Peters*, 95–CV–1641, 1997 WL 599355, at *2–3 (N.D.N.Y. Sept.22, 1997) (Pooler, J.) [collecting cases], *aff'd without opinion*, 175 F.3d 1007 (2d Cir.1999); *Vargas v. Keane*, 93–CV–7852, 1994 WL 693885, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. Dec.12, 1994) (“[Petitioner’s] general objection [that a] Report ... [did not] redress the constitutional violations [experienced by petitioner] ... is a general plea that the Report not be adopted ... [and] cannot be treated as an objection within the meaning of 28 U.S.C. § 636.”), *aff’d*, 86 F.3d 1273 (2d Cir.), *cert. denied*, 519 U.S. 895, 117 S.Ct. 240, 136 L.Ed.2d 169 (1996).

⁴ See *Mario*, 313 F.3d at 766 (“Merely referring the court to previously filed papers or arguments does not constitute an adequate objection under either Fed.R.Civ.P. 72(b) or Local Civil Rule 72.3(a)(3).”); *Camardo v. Gen. Motors Hourly–Rate Emp. Pension Plan*, 806 F.Supp. 380, 382 (W.D.N.Y.1992) (explaining that court need not consider objections that merely constitute a “rehashing” of the same arguments and positions taken in original papers submitted by the magistrate judge); *accord*, *Praileau v. Cnty. of Schenectady*, 09–CV–0924, 2010 WL 3761902, at *1, n. 1 (N.D.N.Y. Sept. 20, 2010) (McAvoy, J.); *Hickman ex rel. M.A.H. v. Astrue*, 07–CV–1077, 2010 WL 2985968, at *3 & n. 3 (N.D.N.Y. July 27, 2010) (Mordue, C.J.); *Almonte v. N.Y.S. Div. of Parole*, 04–CV–0484, 2006 WL 149049, at *4 (N.D.N.Y. Jan.18, 2006) (Sharpe, J.).

⁵ See also *Batista v. Walker*, 94–CV–2826, 1995 WL 453299, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. July 31, 1995) (Sotomayor, J.) (“I am permitted to adopt those sections of [a magistrate judge’s] report to which no specific objection is made, so long as those sections are not facially erroneous.” [internal quotations marks omitted.]).

After conducting the appropriate review, the Court may “accept, reject, or modify, in whole or in part, the findings or recommendations made by the magistrate judge.” 28 U.S.C. § 636(b) (1)(C).

B. Legal Authority for Reviewing a Complaint *Sua Sponte*

*3 Under the circumstances, the Court’s authority to *sua sponte* review Plaintiffs’ Complaint stems from three separate sources. (1) Fed.R.Civ.P. 12(h)(3), which provides that “[i]f the court determines at any time that it lacks subject-matter jurisdiction, the court must dismiss that action”; (2) 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) (B), which provides that, when a plaintiff seeks to proceed *in forma pauperis*, “the court shall dismiss the case at any time if the court determines that—... the action (i) is frivolous or malicious; (ii) fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted; or (iii) seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief”; and (3) the Court’s inherent power to manage its docket.

With regard to the second of the three above-described authorities, the Court notes that the dismissal of an action as barred by the applicable statute of limitation may fall within the ambit of the Court’s power to dismiss a complaint for failure to state a claim pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e).⁶ In addition, the dismissal of an action as duplicative has been found to fall within the ambit of the Court’s power to dismiss a complaint which is frivolous or malicious pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e).⁷

⁶ See *Pino v. Ryan*, 49 F.3d 51, 54 (2d Cir.1995) (“Nothing ... suggests that an affirmative defense appearing on the face of a complaint may not be the basis for a *sua sponte* dismissal under section 1915(d) [section 1915(e) as amended] prior to service of the complaint.”); *accord*, *Pratts v. Coombe*, 49 F. App’x 392, 393 (2d Cir.2003).

⁷ See *Bailey v. Johnson*, 846 F.2d 1019, 1021 (5th Cir.1988) (holding that a complaint that repeats pending or previously litigated claims “may be considered abusive” and dismissed under the authority of Section 1915[e]); *Buckenberger v. Reed*, 10–CV–0856, 2010 WL 1552672, at *1 (E.D.La. Mar.16, 2010) (recommending dismissal of complaint asserting claims which were duplicative of those in a pending action as “malicious”); *Smith v. Ferrell*, 09–CV–0466, 2010 WL 653798, at *2–3 (S.D.Ala. Feb.18, 2010) (dismissing action because claims were duplicative of those in another pending action); *Williams v. Bunn*, 06–CV–0466, 2007 WL 1703816, at *2 (W.D.N.Y. Jun.7, 2007) (dismissing “religious

claim” with prejudice because it was “repetitive of a claim twice brought previously and dismissed for plaintiff’s failure to serve); *Hahn v. Tarnow*, 06–CV–12814, 2006 WL 2160934, at *1 (E.D.Mich. July 31, 2006) (dismissing complaint as “repetitive, malicious and frivolous, and duplicative”); *Blake v. Bentsen*, 95–CV–2227, 1995 WL 428694, at *2 (E.D.N.Y. Jul.11, 1995) (dismissing “repetitious litigation” as abusive and malicious); *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 30, 112 S.Ct. 1728, 118 L.Ed.2d 340 (1992) (recognizing Congress’s concern in 28 U.S.C. § 1915 that “a litigant whose filing fees and court costs are assumed by the public, unlike a paying litigant, lacks an economic incentive to refrain from filing frivolous, malicious, or repetitive lawsuits.”).

With regard to the third of the three above-described authorities, it is well settled that a district court has the power to *sua sponte* dismiss *pro se* complaint based on frivolousness. See, e.g., *Fitzgerald v. First E. Seventh St. Tenants Corp.*, 221 F.3d 362, 363 (2d Cir.2000) (recognizing that district court has power to *sua sponte* dismiss *pro se* complaint based on frivolousness notwithstanding fact that plaintiff has paid statutory filing fee). It is also well settled that “[a]s part of its general power to administer its docket, a district court may stay or dismiss a suit that is duplicative of another federal court suit.” *Curtis v. Citibank, N.A.*, 226 F.3d 133, 138 (2d Cir.2000); see also *Colo. River Water Conservation Dist. v. United States*, 424 U.S. 800, 817, 96 S.Ct. 1236, 47 L.Ed.2d 483 (1976) (“As between federal district courts, ... though no precise rule has evolved, the general principle is to avoid duplicative litigation.”). The power to dismiss a duplicative lawsuit is meant to foster judicial economy and the “comprehensive disposition of litigation.” *Kerotest Mfg. Co. v. C–O–Two Fire Equip. Co.*, 342 U.S. 180, 183, 72 S.Ct. 219, 96 L.Ed. 200 (1952).⁸ The doctrine is also meant to protect parties from “the vexation of concurrent litigation over the same subject matter.” *Adam v. Jacob*, 950 F.2d 89, 93 (2d Cir.1991).⁹

⁸ The Second Circuit affirmed the dismissal of an action which “substantially duplicate[d]” the conspiracy claim asserted in a prior action, notwithstanding the fact that the the conspiracy claim in the first action was dismissed as insufficiently pleaded and plaintiff was afforded an opportunity to amend, because “[plaintiff’s] recourse is to appeal that decision after judgment is

entered in that case, not to file a duplicative second complaint.” *Brown v. Plansky*, 24 F. App’x 26, 28 (2d Cir.2001).

⁹ The rule against duplicative litigation is distinct from, but related to, the doctrine of claim preclusion or *res judicata*, and the two doctrines serve some of the same policies. As the Supreme Court stated over 100 years ago in *United States v. The Haytian Republic*, 154 U.S. 118, 14 S.Ct. 992, 38 L.Ed. 930 (1894), “[T]he true test of the sufficiency of a plea of ‘other suit pending’ in another forum [i]s the legal efficacy of the first suit, when finally disposed of, as ‘the thing adjudged,’ regarding the matters at issue in the second suit.” *Id.* at 124.

C. Legal Standard Governing Dismissal Based on Lack of Subject–Matter Jurisdiction

Magistrate Judge Treece correctly recited the legal standard governing a dismissal based on lack of subject-matter jurisdiction in his Report–Recommendation. (Dkt. No. 4 at 2–3.) As a result, that standard is incorporated herein by reference in this Decision and Order.

D. Legal Standard Governing Dismissal Based on Expiration of Statute of Limitations

*4 Magistrate Judge Treece correctly recited the legal standard governing a dismissal based on the expiration of the relevant statute of limitations in his Report–Recommendation. (Dkt. No. 4 at 3–4.) As a result, that standard is incorporated herein by reference in this Decision and Order.

E. Legal Standard Governing Dismissal Based on Failure to State a Claim

It has long been understood that a dismissal for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, pursuant to Fed.R.Civ.P. 12(b)(6), can be based on one or both of two grounds: (1) a challenge to the “sufficiency of the pleading” under Fed.R.Civ.P. 8(a)(2); or (2) a challenge to the legal cognizability of the claim. *Jackson v. Onondaga Cnty.*, 549 F.Supp.2d 204, 211, nn. 15–16 (N.D.N.Y.2008) (McAvoy, J., adopting Report–Recommendation on *de novo* review).

Because Plaintiffs’ Complaint is dismissed based on the first ground, a few words regarding that ground are appropriate. Rule 8(a)(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure requires

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that a pleading contain “a *short and plain* statement of the claim *showing* that the pleader is entitled to relief.” Fed.R.Civ.P. 8(a)(2) [emphasis added]. In the Court's view, this tension between permitting a “short and plain statement” and requiring that the statement “show[]” an entitlement to relief is often at the heart of misunderstandings that occur regarding the pleading standard established by Fed.R.Civ.P. 8(a)(2).

On the one hand, the Supreme Court has long characterized the “short and plain” pleading standard under Fed.R.Civ.P. 8(a)(2) as “simplified” and “liberal.” *Jackson*, 549 F.Supp.2d at 212, n. 20 (citing Supreme Court case). On the other hand, the Supreme Court has held that, by requiring the above-described “showing,” the pleading standard under Fed.R.Civ.P. 8(a)(2) requires that the pleading contain a statement that “give[s] the defendant *fair notice* of what the plaintiff's claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.” *Jackson*, 549 F.Supp.2d at 212, n. 17 (citing Supreme Court cases) (emphasis added).

The Supreme Court has explained that such *fair notice* has the important purpose of “enabl[ing] the adverse party to answer and prepare for trial” and “facilitat[ing] a proper decision on the merits” by the court. *Jackson*, 549 F.Supp.2d at 212, n. 18 (citing Supreme Court cases); *Rusyniak v. Gensini*, 629 F.Supp.2d 203, 213 & n. 32 (N.D.N.Y.2009) (Suddaby, J.) (citing Second Circuit cases). For this reason, as one commentator has correctly observed, the “liberal” notice pleading standard “has its limits.” 2 *Moore's Federal Practice* § 12.34[1][b] at 12–61 (3d ed.2003). For example, numerous Supreme Court and Second Circuit decisions exist holding that a pleading has failed to meet the “liberal” notice pleading standard. *Rusyniak*, 629 F. Supp. 2d at 213, n. 22 (citing Supreme Court and Second Circuit cases); see also *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 129 S.Ct. 1937, 1949–52, 173 L.Ed.2d 868 (2009).

*5 Most notably, in *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, the Supreme Court reversed an appellate decision holding that a complaint had stated an actionable antitrust claim under 15 U.S.C. § 1. *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 127 S.Ct. 1955, 167 L.Ed.2d 929 (2007). In doing so, the Court “retire[d]” the famous statement by the Court in *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 45–46, 78 S.Ct. 99, 2 L.Ed.2d 80 (1957), that “a complaint should not be dismissed for failure to state a claim unless it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of his claim which would entitle him to relief.” *Twombly*, 127 S.Ct. at 1968–69.

Rather than turn on the *conceivability* of an actionable claim, the Court clarified, the “fair notice” standard turns on the *plausibility* of an actionable claim. *Id.* at 1965–74. The Court explained that, while this does not mean that a pleading need “set out in detail the facts upon which [the claim is based],” it does mean that the pleading must contain at least “some factual allegation[s].” *Id.* at 1965. More specifically, the “[f]actual allegations must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level [to a plausible level],” assuming (of course) that all the allegations in the complaint are true. *Id.*

As for the nature of what is “plausible,” the Supreme Court explained that “[a] claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 129 S.Ct. 1937, 1949, 173 L.Ed.2d 868 (2009). “[D]etermining whether a complaint states a plausible claim for relief ... [is] a context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense.... [W]here the well-pleaded facts do not permit the court to infer more than the mere possibility of misconduct, the complaint has alleged-but it has not show[n]-that the pleader is entitled to relief.” *Iqbal*, 129 S.Ct. at 1950 [internal quotation marks and citations omitted]. However, while the plausibility standard “asks for more than a sheer possibility that a defendant has acted unlawfully,” *id.*, it “does not impose a probability requirement.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556.

Because of this requirement of factual allegations plausibly suggesting an entitlement to relief, “the tenet that a court must accept as true all of the allegations contained in the complaint is inapplicable to legal conclusions. Threadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported by merely conclusory statements, do not suffice.” *Iqbal*, 129 S.Ct. at 1949. Similarly, a pleading that only “tenders naked assertions devoid of further factual enhancement” will not suffice. *Iqbal*, 129 S.Ct. at 1949 (internal citations and alterations omitted). Rule 8 “demands more than an unadorned, the-defendant-unlawfully-harmed-me accusation.” *Id.* (citations omitted).

*6 This pleading standard applies even to *pro se* litigants. While the special leniency afforded to *pro se* civil rights litigants somewhat loosens the procedural rules governing the form of pleadings (as the Second Circuit has observed), it does not completely relieve a *pro se* plaintiff of the duty to satisfy the pleading standards set forth in Fed.R.Civ.P. 8, 10 and 12.¹⁰ Rather, as both the Supreme Court and Second Circuit have repeatedly recognized, the requirements

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set forth in Fed.R.Civ.P. 8, 10 and 12 are procedural rules that even *pro se* civil rights plaintiffs must follow.¹¹ Stated more simply, when a plaintiff is proceeding *pro se*, “all normal rules of pleading are not absolutely suspended.” *Jackson*, 549 F.Supp.2d at 214, n. 28 [citations omitted].¹²

¹⁰ See *Vega v. Artus*, 610 F.Supp.2d 185, 196 & nn. 8–9 (N.D.N.Y.2009) (Suddaby, J.) (citing Second Circuit cases); *Rusyniak*, 629 F.Supp.2d at 214 & n. 34 (citing Second Circuit cases).

¹¹ See *Vega*, 610 F.Supp.2d at 196, n. 10 (citing Supreme Court and Second Circuit cases); *Rusyniak*, 629 F.Supp.2d at 214 & n. 34 (citing Second Circuit cases).

¹² It should be emphasized that Fed.R.Civ.P. 8's plausibility standard, explained in *Twombly*, was in no way retracted or diminished by the Supreme Court's decision (two weeks later) in *Erickson v. Pardus*, in which (when reviewing a *pro se* pleading) the Court stated, “Specific facts are not necessary” to successfully state a claim under Fed.R.Civ.P. 8(a)(2). *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 127 S.Ct. 2197, 2200, 167 L.Ed.2d 1081 (2007) [emphasis added]. That statement was merely an abbreviation of the often-repeated point of law—first offered in *Conley* and repeated in *Twombly*—that a pleading need not “set out in detail the facts upon which [the claim is based]” in order to successfully state a claim. *Twombly*, 127 S.Ct. 1965, n. 3 (citing *Conley*, 355 U.S. at 47) [emphasis added]. That statement did not mean that all pleadings may achieve the requirement of “fair notice” without ever alleging any facts whatsoever. Clearly, there must still be enough fact set out (however set out, whether in detail or in a generalized fashion) to raise a right to relief above the speculative level to a plausible level. See *Rusyniak*, 629 F.Supp.2d at 214 & n. 35 (explaining holding in *Erickson*).

F. Legal Standard Governing Dismissal Based on Duplicative Nature of Action

Although no precise test has been articulated for determining whether actions are duplicative, “the general rule is that a suit is duplicative of another suit if the parties, issues and available relief do not significantly differ between the two actions.” *I.A. Durbin, Inc. v. Jefferson Nat. Bank*, 793

F.2d 1541, 1551 (11th Cir.1986). “Courts generally look to the identity of the parties, legal claims, factual allegations including temporal circumstances, and the relief sought to determine if the complaint is repetitive or malicious.” *Hahn*, 2006 WL 2160934, at *3.

It is worth noting that district courts have broad discretion in determining whether an action should be dismissed as duplicative. *Lopez v. Ferguson*, 361 F. App'x 225, 226 (2d Cir.2010) (affirming dismissal of action as duplicative of a pending class action as to which plaintiff fell within the certified class).¹³ There are several approaches to the proper disposition of duplicative actions, including stay of the second action, dismissal without prejudice, and consolidation. *Curtis*, 226 F.3d at 138. In addition, “simple dismissal of the second suit is another common disposition because plaintiffs have no right to maintain two actions on the same subject in the same court, against the same defendant at the same time.” *Id.* at 138–39.¹⁴

¹³ See also *Flemming v. Wurzberger*, 322 F. App'x 69, 71 (2d Cir.2009); *Curtis*, 226 F.3d at 138.

¹⁴ See also *Zerilli v. Evening News Ass'n*, 628 F.2d 217, 222 (D.C.Cir.1980); *Walton v. Eaton Corp.*, 563 F.2d 66, 70 (3d Cir.1977) (*en banc*).

G. Legal Standard Governing Dismissal Based on Doctrines of Res Judicata and/or Collateral Estoppel

Claim preclusion, also sometimes referenced to as res judicata, requires that a final judgment of an action on the merits be given preclusive effect, barring parties, as well as those in privity with them, from relitigating claims which were or could have been raised in the prior action. *Marvel Characters, Inc. v. Simon*, 310 F.3d 280, 286–87 (2d Cir.2002); see also *Fay v. South Colonie Cent. Sch. Dist.*, 802 F.2d 21, 28 (2d Cir.1986) (citing *Federated Dep't Stores v. Moitie*, 452 U.S. 394, 398 [1981]), overruled on other grounds, *Taylor v. Vermont Dep't of Educ.*, 313 F.3d 768 (2d Cir.2002).

Issue preclusion, a more narrow doctrine often referred to as collateral estoppel, bars a party that has had a full and fair opportunity to litigate an issue of fact or law from relitigating the same issue once it has been actually and necessarily decided against that party or its privy. *McKithen v. Brown*, 481 F.3d 89, 105 (2d Cir.2007); *Marvel*, 310 F.3d at 288–89.

III. ANALYSIS

*7 As stated above in Part I.C. of this Decision and Order, Plaintiffs' Objections argue that Magistrate Judge Treece made the following errors: (1) the Court does have subject-matter jurisdiction in this case because the relief requested does not require the Court to "become enmeshed in factual disputes" (Dkt. No. 5 at 3); (2) Plaintiffs, indeed, stated a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 because they have adequately alleged Defendants Dalton and Danaher are state actors (Dkt. No. 5 at 4); and (3) the action is not time-barred because the state court "matter has been ongoing for the past seven years." (Dkt. No. 5 at 4.)

In accordance with N.D.N.Y. L.R. 72.1(c), the Court finds the first and second objections are specific in nature because Plaintiffs identified the portions of Magistrate Judge Treece's Report–Recommendation to which they object with particularity, and Plaintiffs cited (albeit improper) legal authority in an effort to support their objections. (See generally Dkt. No. 5.) As a result, the Court subjects those portions of Magistrate Judge Treece's Report–Recommendation to which Plaintiffs object to a *de novo* review. Fed.R.Civ.P. 72(b)(2); 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1) (C).

Plaintiffs' third objection, however, is only general in nature. Although Plaintiffs specifically identify the portion of the Report–Recommendation to which they object, they fail to provide any legal basis for the objection. (See generally Dkt. No. 5 at 4–6 .) As a result, the Court reviews that portion of Magistrate Judge Treece's Report–Recommendation to which Plaintiffs object for only clear error. Fed.R.Civ.P. 72(b)(2); 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C).

After carefully subjecting Magistrate Judge Treece's Report–Recommendation to the appropriate level of review, the Court finds no error in the Report–Recommendation. Magistrate Judge Treece employed the proper standards, accurately recited the facts, and reasonably applied the law to those facts. As a result, the Report–Recommendation is accepted and adopted in its entirety for the reasons stated therein. The court would add only five brief points.

First, those portions of Magistrate Judge Treece's Report–Recommendation that the Court has reviewed only for clear error (e.g., the holding that Plaintiffs' claims are barred by the statute of limitations) would survive even a *de novo* review.

Second, Plaintiff's argument that the Court need not "become enmeshed in factual disputes" (and thus it does have subject-

matter jurisdiction in this case) is without merit for several reasons. For example, to determine whether Plaintiffs' due process rights were violated, the Court would inevitably have to engage in a factual inquiry regarding the custodial placement of BMD with Defendant Dalton. The Court might, for example, need to evaluate the same facts the state court did in making its custody determination in the first place. Doing so, however, would violate the general rule that domestic relations matters are primarily matters for state courts.

*8 Third, Plaintiffs' action appears largely duplicative of two previously filed actions: (1) *Deuel v. Dalton*, 06–CV–0234, Complaint (M.D. Tenn. filed March 23, 2006); and (2) *Deuel v. Dalton*, 11–CV–0466, Complaint (M.D. Tenn. filed May 16, 2011). While the first of these two actions appears to have been dismissed only without prejudice,¹⁵ the second of these two actions is still pending in the Middle District of Tennessee-contributing to the waste of judicial resources, and running the risk of inconsistent rulings and preclusion by collateral estoppel.¹⁶ The Court notes that in May 20011 an Order was issued in the second action, referring the case to a magistrate judge for a review of whether the action is frivolous. *Deuel v. Dalton*, 11–CV–0466, Order (M.D. Tenn. filed May 18, 2011) (Trauger, J.). As a result, this action is dismissed based also on this alternative ground.

¹⁵ *Deuel v. Dalton*, 06–CV–0234, Memorandum and Order (M.D. Tenn. filed August 15, 2006) (Trauger, J.). See also *Hernandez v. Conriv Realty Assocs.*, 182 F.3d 121, 123 (2d Cir.1999) ("[W]here a court lacks subject matter jurisdiction, it also lacks the power to dismiss with prejudice.").

¹⁶ For example, both the second action and the action before this Court present claims against Frank Dalton, John and Jane Does 1–100, and ABC Corp's 1–100, for violation of the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment (as well as fraud and conspiracy), arising from, *inter alia*, the unfavorable rulings Plaintiff Loriann Deuel received in child-custody proceedings in New York State court from 2002 to 2004 due to the alleged misconduct of Dalton, Family Court Judge Catherine Cholakis and Law Guardian Phillip J. Danaher. See *Deuel v. Dalton*, 11–CV–0466, Complaint, at 4–5, 9–12, 15–18, 30–32 (M.D. Tenn. filed May 16, 2011).

Fourth, Plaintiffs' claims against New York State Unified Court System and Cholakakis are barred by the Eleventh Amendment and the doctrine of absolute immunity.¹⁷ Similarly, Plaintiffs' claims against Defendant Danaher are barred by the doctrine of qualified immunity (if not also the doctrine of absolute immunity). Moreover, Plaintiffs' Complaint does not allege facts plausibly suggesting that Defendant Dalton is a state actor for purposes of 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Furthermore, Plaintiffs' Complaint does not allege facts plausibly suggesting the personal involvement of Defendants John and Jane Does 1–100 and ABC Corp's 1–100 in any of the violations alleged. (*See generally* Dkt. No. 1.) Finally, Plaintiffs' Complaint does not allege facts plausibly suggesting that Plaintiff Lorraine Deuel has standing to assert any claims in this action (or even that she bears any familial or custodial relationship to BMD). (*Id.*)¹⁸ Simply stated, additional pleading defects plague Plaintiffs' claims against each of the Defendants in this action, as well as each of the claims asserted by Plaintiff Lorraine Deuel. As a result, this action is dismissed based also on this alternative ground.

¹⁷ The Court notes that, in their Objections and Complaint, Plaintiffs' acknowledge that (1) their claims against Defendant Cholakakis are barred by the doctrine of absolute immunity, and (2) their claims against Defendant New York State Unified Court System are based on their claims against Defendant Cholakakis (pursuant to the doctrine of respondeat superior). (Dkt. No. 5, at 6; Dkt. No. 1, at 31.)

¹⁸ The Court notes that Plaintiffs' argument in their Objections that Lorraine Deuel was a party to “a recent appellate decision” is simply not sufficient to state the claims in question. (Dkt. No. 5, at 6.)

Fifth, and finally, Plaintiffs' request for leave to amend their Complaint is denied because the numerous pleading defects in Plaintiff's Complaint are substantive rather than formal.¹⁹ As a result, the Court sees no need to *sua sponte* grant Plaintiffs leave to amend those claims before it dismisses them.²⁰

¹⁹ For example, lack of subject-matter jurisdiction and the expiration of the statute of limitations are substantive defects. *See U.S. ex rel. Phipps v. Comprehensive Comty. Dev. Corp.*, 152 F.Supp.2d 443, 455 (S.D.N.Y.2001) (“[I]t is not appropriate to grant Phipps's request [for leave to amend

the Complaint] because the Court has determined that it does not have subject matter jurisdiction over this action.”); *Chan v. Reno*, 916 F.Supp. 1289, 1302 (S.D.N.Y.1996) (“An amendment is considered futile if the amended pleading fails to state a claim or would be subject to a successful motion to dismiss on some other basis. As will be discussed herein, [the proposed amended complaint] ... presents a non-justiciable claim and fails to present this Court with subject matter jurisdiction. Therefore, because [the proposed amended complaint] would be subject to a successful motion to dismiss ..., amendment would be futile.”); *Grace v. Rosenstock*, 228 F.3d 40, 53 (2d Cir.2000) (“Amendment would likely be futile if ... the claims the plaintiff sought to add would be barred by the applicable statute of limitations.”); *accord, In re WorldCom, Inc. Securities Litigation*, 303 F.Supp.2d 385, 390 (S.D.N.Y.2004).

²⁰ *See Foman v. Davis*, 371 U.S. 178, 182, 83 S.Ct. 227, 9 L.Ed.2d 222 (1962) (finding that denial of leave to amend is not abuse of discretion where amendment would be futile); *Ruffolo v. Oppenheimer & Co.*, 987 F.2d 129, 131 (2d Cir.1993) (“Where it appears that granting leave to amend is unlikely to be productive, ... it is not an abuse of discretion to deny leave to amend.”) (citations omitted); *Cuoco v. Moritsugu*, 222 F.3d 99, 112 (2d Cir.2000) (“The problem with Cuoco's causes of action is substantive; better pleading will not cure it. Repleading would thus be futile. Such a futile request to replead should be denied.”) (citation omitted); *Cortec Indus., Inc. v. Sum Holding L.P.*, 949 F.2d 42, 48 (2d Cir.1991) (“Of course, where a plaintiff is unable to allege any fact sufficient to support its claim, a complaint should be dismissed with prejudice.”) (citation omitted); *Health-Chem Corp. v. Baker*, 915 F.2d 805, 810 (2d Cir.1990) (“[W]here ... there is no merit in the proposed amendments, leave to amend should be denied”); *Brown v. Peters*, 95–CV–1641, 1997 WL 599355, at *1 (N.D.N.Y. Sept.22, 1997) (Pooler, J.) (“[T]he court need not grant leave to amend where it appears that amendment would prove to be unproductive or futile.”).

ACCORDINGLY, it is

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ORDERED that Magistrate Judge Treece's Report–Recommendation (Dkt. No. 4) is **ACCEPTED** and **ADOPTED** in its entirety; and it is further

The Court certifies, for purposes of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3), that any appeal taken from this Decision and Order would not be taken in good faith.

ORDERED that Plaintiffs' Complaint (Dkt. No. 1) is **DISMISSED** in its entirety.

All Citations

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United States District Court, S.D. New York.

Robert W. JOHNSON, Plaintiff,

v.

PROGRESSIVE.COM, et al., Defendants.

19-CV-11202 (CM)

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Signed 02/05/2020

Attorneys and Law Firms

Robert W. Johnson, Bronx, NY, pro se.

ORDER OF DISMISSAL

COLLEEN McMAHON, Chief United States District Judge:

*1 Plaintiff Robert W. Johnson, of the Bronx, New York, filed this complaint *pro se* and *in forma pauperis* (IFP). The Court dismisses this action for the reasons set forth below.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

The Court must dismiss a complaint, or portion thereof, that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) (B), 1915A(b); see *Abbas v. Dixon*, 480 F.3d 636, 639 (2d Cir. 2007). While the law mandates dismissal on any of these grounds, the Court is obliged to construe *pro se* pleadings liberally, *Harris v. Mills*, 572 F.3d 66, 72 (2d Cir. 2009), and interpret them to raise the “strongest [claims] that they suggest,” *Triestman v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 470 F.3d 471, 474-75 (2d Cir. 2006) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted) (emphasis in original).

A claim is frivolous when it “lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact.” *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 324-25 (1989), *abrogated on other grounds by Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007); see also *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 32-33 (1992) (holding that “finding of factual frivolousness is appropriate when the facts alleged rise to the level of the irrational or the wholly incredible”); *Livingston v. Adirondack Beverage Co.*, 141 F.3d 434, 437 (2d Cir.

1998) (“[A]n action is ‘frivolous’ when either: (1) the factual contentions are clearly baseless ...; or (2) the claim is based on an indisputably meritless legal theory.”) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted).

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Plaintiff filed this complaint against multiple insurance companies and other entities, including Progressive, Axxcess Insurance Agencies Ltd., New York Automobile Insurance Plan, Global Liberty Insurance Company, Arizona Premium Finance, Chevrolet, ADESA, Nationwide, Victoria Fire & Casualty Company, Allstate, Geico, and AAA. Plaintiff seeks “\$999 trillion” in punitive damages, “\$999 billion for future pain and suffering,” and “100% ownership of corporation assets, bank accounts & equities.” The complaint contains no facts.

Even when read with the “special solicitude” due *pro se* pleadings, *Triestman*, 470 F.3d at 474-75, Plaintiff’s claims rise to the level of the irrational, and there is no legal theory on which he can rely. See *Denton*, 504 U.S. at 33; *Livingston*, 141 F.3d at 437.

District courts generally grant a *pro se* plaintiff an opportunity to amend a complaint to cure its defects, but leave to amend is not required where it would be futile. See *Hill v. Curcione*, 657 F.3d 116, 123-24 (2d Cir. 2011); *Salahuddin v. Cuomo*, 861 F.2d 40, 42 (2d Cir. 1988). Because the defects in Plaintiff’s complaint cannot be cured with an amendment, and in light of Plaintiff’s abusive litigation history, discussed below, the Court declines to grant Plaintiff leave to amend.

Plaintiff has filed scores of cases around the country in connection with a 2017 car accident in Buffalo, New York, and this complaint is consistent with his pattern of vexatious and frivolous litigation. In *Johnson v. Wolf*, ECF 1:19-CV-7337, 5 (S.D.N.Y. Nov. 5, 2019), Judge Wood, after discussing Plaintiff’s extensive litigation history, dismissed Plaintiff’s action as frivolous, for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, and for seeking monetary relief against Defendants who are immune from such relief; he also ordered Plaintiff to show cause why he should not be barred from filing any future action IFP in this Court without prior permission). Plaintiff did not file a declaration as directed, but instead, on November 13, 2019, Plaintiff filed a notice of appeal, and that appeal is pending.¹

1 A review of the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) system reveals that since November 5, 2019, Plaintiff has filed ten new actions in other federal district courts and, including this case, four new actions in this Court. See *Johnson v. New York State Ins. Fund*, ECF 1:19-CV-11831, 2 (S.D.N.Y. filed Dec. 20, 2019); *Johnson v. Progressive.com*, ECF 1:19-CV-11202, 2 (S.D.N.Y. filed Dec. 5, 2019); *Johnson v. New York State Dep't of Trans.*, ECF 1:19-CV-11127, 2 (S.D.N.Y. filed Dec. 2, 2019).

*2 By order dated January 27, 2020, entered in *Johnson v. Town of Onondaga*, ECF 1:19-CV-11128, 4 (CM) (S.D.N.Y. Jan. 27, 2020), this Court also directed Plaintiff to show cause why a filing injunction should not be imposed. And at least one other court has already barred Plaintiff from filing *pro se* complaints without prior permission. See *Johnson v. Abel*, No. 19-CV-2685 (E.D. Ohio Aug. 5, 2019) (deeming Plaintiff a “vexatious” litigant and barring him from filing new *pro se* actions without prior leave of court).

The Court's prior warnings remain in effect.

CONCLUSION

The Clerk of Court is directed to mail a copy of this order to Plaintiff and note service on the docket.

The Court dismisses this action as frivolous. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i).

The Court certifies under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) that any appeal from this order would not be taken in good faith, and therefore *in forma pauperis* status is denied for the purpose of an appeal. Cf. *Coppedge v. United States*, 369 U.S. 438, 444-45 (1962) (holding that an appellant demonstrates good faith when he seeks review of a nonfrivolous issue).

SO ORDERED.

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